

A BURGLARY IN TWO VERSIONS.
HERS.

It was last Tuesday. I have always known, and said, that they would come, but it is sometimes a dreadful thing to be a successful prophet. Yet, curiously enough, my first thought was—perhaps HUBERT will admit now that I was right! He has always laughed at the idea of Burglars.

There was no doubt about it now; I could distinctly hear their steady filing. Oh! it was awful—simply awful! I had been reading *Oliver Twist* aloud that evening, and now I imagined a man like Bill Sikes bursting his way into the bedroom. HUBERT is fairly muscular, I suppose, but I recognised that he would be as a child in the grasp of such a man. I felt that it would be best for him to throw himself upon the creature's mercy.

He was still sleeping peacefully. I think he would sleep through an earthquake! It took quite a sharp blow to wake him. "There are burglars in the house," I whispered; "you must go down."

I hope he is sorry now for what he said. He spoke very foolishly at first, and even swore slightly. Then he said, "This is the ninth time in three weeks that you've heard them, and what with my insomnia and your burglars I shall soon be fit for a madhouse!"

HUBERT deceives himself about his sleep, but it was no moment for idle recriminations. I just told him to listen, and then in the moonlight I could see his face grow pale.

He got slowly, very slowly, out of bed, and found his father's old revolver. Even then, even at that dreadful moment, I was glad that I have never allowed him to get any cartridges. For it seemed positively to wobble in his grasp.

Of course, his hand was shaking with the cold. And that was probably why both our teeth were clicking together quite musically. And anyway, I am quite, quite certain that he would be brave as any lion in the daytime.

And he was brave, even then. He walked slowly towards the door, and then turned to me with a look in his

eyes that I shall never forget. There was something so pathetic about it! "Good-bye, dear!" he said, and I scarcely recognised his voice, it was so gentle. "If—if anything should happen to me, tell your Aunt that I forgave her freely and fully!"

It seemed a beautiful thing to say at such a moment, and it has made me see what a noble nature HUBERT's really is. I told dear Aunt JANE about it afterwards, but somehow it scarcely seemed to please her. She has never really understood him. But I saw now that he had a foreboding of danger, and was only going down out of reckless bravado. I remembered that everything was fully insured, and I felt that if I played the coward I could save dear HUBERT's pride.

like WINSTON CHURCHILL, SEYMOUR HICKS, and myself, can realise what sleeplessness means! I had been listening to them for some minutes, when MABEL drove her elbow into my ribs. It was a cruel blow, but I regained command of myself in a moment.

"Don't be frightened," I said quietly. "There are burglars in the house, and I must go down."

I didn't like it much, of course, but something had to be done. Besides, a householder has responsibilities which certain ribald bachelors cannot understand. And anyway it was rather exciting. I got my revolver, and was just tiptoeing from the room, hoping to surprise the fellows, when—MABEL lost her nerve. She had been reading *Oliver*

Twist the evening before, and women seem to have far more vivid imaginations than men. Poor little thing, she said she couldn't be left alone, and became hysterical, clinging to me, and all that sort of thing!

I was rather sick at missing the chance of a pot at those burglars, but I didn't see that I could leave her. However, as it turned out I managed to frighten them away. I shouldn't dream of laughing at

MABEL for what she did. I fancy that she is as brave as most women as a rule—at any rate in daylight.

Our Glorious Game.

THE rumour that "Linesman" had emigrated to America is unfounded. What gave rise to it was the appearance in *The Daily Telegraph* of the following message from that paper's special correspondent with the M.C.C. team:

"There was a great crowd of spectators, although few of them knew very little of the tenets of the game."

Our Inglorious Game.

"FOOTBALL is evidently settling down into something more like what is expected. . . . The match at Hyde Road was marked by a regrettable incident, for the referee found it necessary to send off Stewart, and afterwards there was some stone-throwing at the referee."—*Manchester Daily Dispatch*.



THE FLYMAN'S FOE.

So I jumped out of bed, and caught hold of him, and said that I wouldn't be left alone. I really think I did it rather well, and certainly it is almost the first time that HUBERT has agreed to anything without argument. On this occasion he let himself be persuaded—well, quite easily. Then he barricaded the door with furniture, and we went back to bed.

Some silly people have suggested that there were no burglars at all, just because something frightened them away before they could get in. But could both HUBERT and I have heard them filing, if they were not there? This seems to me conclusive, as the papers say.

HIS. .

Last Tuesday the burglars whom MABEL has so long expected really came. She has heard them pretty constantly, but this was genuine. She has the luck to sleep soundly, and it was I who heard them first. No one, except people with restless brains

THE TOWER.

DAD took us to London the other day. We got there pretty early, and Dad put us in a hansom with him at Liverpool Street and we drove off to see the Tower of London. The Tower was all right, and the crowns were gorgeous, but they've got too many old swords and suits of armour stuck all over the place. One's just like another, and anyhow they're no use now. Nobody ever wears armour in battles. But I don't want to write about the Tower. This is about NINA's deeds, so I'll begin when we got back home. After we'd had tea NINA started. First she was Lady JANE GREY, just like the picture post-cards. She looked out of the window and said, "Is that my beloved husband going forth to be executed? Hurry up, HERBERT; you're my husband. Go outside and walk past the window with your head drooping and your hands tied behind your back. Lo, he bears himself bravely, though he is very young and handsome." Then she burst into sham tears, and I went out to walk past the window. She waved her hand to me, and I kissed mine to her, which made her angry, because she said if my hands were tied I couldn't do such a thing.

After that we each had an extra bit of cake, and then she went at it again. I was to be Lord LOVAT and to get my head cut off. I said, "Who was he?" She said, "He was a rebel, and his name was SIMON FRASER, or The old Fox." I said directly, "I don't mind being him, but if I am you can't kill me like that. Nobody cuts foxes' heads off." She bothered me like anything for a long time, but I stuck to it. Dad told me about foxes, and I'm sure I was right. So she had to give up making me into Lord LOVAT.

At last she clapped her hands and said she'd got it. We were to be the Princes in the Tower, and Dad was to be RICHARD THE THIRD, and smother us in our sleep. Dad was asleep in the smoking-room. I'd peeped in and seen him in his arm-chair, and I'd gone out very quietly, because when he's like that he doesn't like to be disturbed. If somebody wakes him he always pretends he's been awake all the time. Mum often wakes him, and he throws a cushion at her. Of course it's in joke. Well, NINA said it didn't matter about Dad being asleep: he'd do just as well like that. First of all NINA put on my cricket cap and said she was EDWARD THE FIFTH, and I was his brother. Then we went and stood on the stairs, and she said in an awful voice, "Hist! Dost hear footsteps? Or is it a rat in the arras? No, yes—no, yes. It is a stealthy footstep. Brother, they intend to murder us in a dastardly way. Whither shall we fly?" I said, "Let's go down-stairs; the front door's open. We can get out that way and make a bolt through the garden gate."

"Brother," she said, "thou art a wanderer in thy mind. Prate not to me of garden gates. Ah, they approach." Then she gave a scream and fell down with a cushion, which she stuffed over her head. When she was quite dead she got up and told me to lie down and be smothered. She did it with the same cushion, and said I wasn't to kick, but to give one groan and then say, "I die," and to go off quickly. I did. When she'd finished me she jumped up and said, "We will now go and haunt our murderer." I said, "Our murderer is asleep in the smoking-room. He'll be in a bait if you wake him." She said that didn't matter; he must be haunted, and off she went. I went with her. Dad was having a jolly good sleep. I could hear him as soon as we got to the door. NINA put a handkerchief on her head when she was inside, and stood close to Dad, and said in a

deep voice, "RICHARD, I am thy murdered nephew, and this is my brother. We come from our graves, to which thou shalt soon follow us. Tremble, RICHARD." Dad didn't tremble a bit. He woke up with a sort of bang, and said, "How often have I told you children not to bother me when I'm busy? Run along, both of you." NINA wouldn't give in. She said, "RICHARD THE THIRD, we are the Princes you have so foully slain." "Oh, that's the game, is it?" said Dad, and he took his cushion and chivied us round the room and smothered us all over again. It was the best joke we've had yet—at least I thought so; but NINA said it was all wrong, because people who were haunted had to be afraid, and Dad wasn't afraid a bit. She was sorry she hadn't asked Mrs. AUSTIN to be RICHARD.

R. C. L.

THE TRAIL OF THE SERPENT.

[According to *The Sheffield Telegraph* two tourists have seen the sea-serpent at Tintagel. The most careful details are mentioned.]

I FELT my courage steadily abating;
Alternately I seemed to freeze and burn;
For oh, my heart was weary of awaiting
The prodigal's return.

Daily I scanned my *Mail*, to learn with sorrow
That even IT knew not where he lay hid;
Then whispered bravely, "He will come to-morrow;"
Only he never did.

And yet in other years I can remember,
Rising like Venus from the crested foam,
The Great Sea Serpent early in September
Trekked to his English home.

And round what someone calls our "billow-swept isle,"
With manners that endeared him everywhere,
He cruised, the model of a genial reptile,
Sampling our Northern air.

Lone mariners recalled that *dies iræ*,
When in their lonely watches at the wheel
They saw him rising, sinuous and wiry,
And felt their blood congeal.

Sea-captains (men by nature strangely truthful)
Described in detail how they'd seen him prance
A hundred feet aloft, and filled each youth full
With love of high romance.

About his stature, à la Miss CORELLI,
Daily Express-ed the free opinions came,
Pounding each rival theory to jelly,
Bruiting abroad his fame.

Romance indeed clung round him like a halo;
Even the Gooseberry's giant girth was less;
Yet all this year, like *Brer Fox*, did he lay low,
Cheating the ha'penny Press.

But now we celebrate his resurrection;
Two brave Tintagel tourists wire with glee
They watched him gambol while his scaly neck shone
High o'er the sunlit sea.

Salve! Sir Serpent; let me say that we could
Have better spared a BANNERMAN than lose
These tales about your flowing mane and sleek hood
That stir my lyric Muse.

The Prodigal.

"SCENE AT INVERURIE COUNCIL
OFFICIAL HERRING RETURNS."

Aberdeen Free Press.



A DIVIL OF A GAME.





• THE BULLYON-BOUNDERMERES AT BLANKENBAD.

Mrs. B.-B. "WHY, THAT WAS THE DEAR DUCHESS OF CLACKMANNAN, AND SHE FORGOT TO REMEMBER ME!"

Mrs. Jimmy Sharpe. "SURE SHE DIDN'T REMEMBER TO FORGET YOU, MY DEAR?"

A BROWNE STUDY.

SIR J. CRICHTON-BROWNE's impassioned vindication at Llandudno of the mutton-chop and sirloin of beef against the attacks of food-faddists, has impelled the editor of *The Knife and Fork* to collect the opinions of a number of representative men and women in various walks in life, from which we have made the following selection:—

Mr. BALFOUR, in reply to a question as to his favourite fare, stated that he believed the true solution of the food problem lay in a judicious reconciliation of apparently irreconcilable extremes. Personally he declared himself to be a convinced vegetarian, with a strong preference for New Zealand mutton.

Lord ROSEBERY said that he believed in varying one's diet according to the environment. At Dalmeny he affected porridge, Scotch broth, and haggis, but when he went to Italy he subsisted entirely on Neapolitan ices, spaghetti, and *Asti spumante*.

Mr. VICTOR GRAYSON, the famous broken bottle-holder of the Socialists, expressed his strong condemnation of the views advanced by Sir J. CRICHTON-BROWNE. It was impossible to cultivate idealism on a meat diet. The world would never progress until all autocrats, plutocrats, and hereditary legislators were forced to disgorge their ill-gotten gains, and sentenced to perpetual confinement on a regimen of ground glass and hemlock. What was good enough for ostriches and SOCRATES was good enough for the pampered minions of Mammon.

The Duke of DEVONSHIRE said that he had been a Free Foeder all his life. He had tried the chloroform lozenges described by Sir J. CRICHTON-BROWNE as a preventive of insomnia, but found them inefficacious. In a fit of abstraction he once ate portions of a hop pillow, but did not recommend the practice as one to be universally followed.

Mr. HALL CAINE attributes his longevity chiefly to plain living and

high thinking. There should be always, he thinks, a harmony between an author's work and his diet. Thus when he was writing *The Christian* he lived for weeks on quail. For the rest he liked butter, but detested bacon and Marie biscuits.

Miss MARIE SCARLATTI is a convinced and confirmed fruitarian, as becomes one of Italian extraction. But there are occasions, she admits, when a slight deviation from this diet is not only permissible but desirable. For example, after witnessing a performance of *The Christian*, she had to be revived with chicken and champagne. Of late years she has never tasted any sugar except that made from beetroot, all products of the cane being peculiarly distasteful to her.

Mr. CHESTERTON seldom takes any solid refreshment except at breakfast, lunch, tea, and dinner. As he wittily puts it, "How can a man stand four-square against the shocks of fortune unless he eats four square meals a day?"

ETON NOTES.

(Specially compiled for readers of the "Daily Mail.")

[N.B.—The words in inverted commas are technical, and peculiar to Eton College. They have been picked up at great expense from several tradesmen in the vicinity, and though we cannot guarantee their correctness, yet every care has been taken to use them in their appropriate place.]

ANOTHER "half" has commenced, and most of the students have now returned to "m'tutor's." A few, who have obtained "short leave" to stay up in Scotland for the shooting, will return later, while little Lord HENRY CLEVEDEN is still at Folkestone with mumps. His sister, Lady DOROTHY, a merry little person of five, luckily escaped.

The news that the well-known "swishing-block" had been stolen since last "half" was received with great enthusiasm among the junior members of the college, who were seen standing in groups on "Agar's Plough" excitedly discussing the situation. Members of "Pop" (the School Debating Society, corresponding to the "Union" at Cambridge), as beffited their dignity, professed to be entirely indifferent on the subject, and were much more concerned as to whether a "rouge" would be scored this year in the annual "Wall game" between the "Oppidans" and the "King's Scholars." The Earl of CULLODEN expressed an opinion on the subject, which was received with the respectful attention due to the heir of such a noble estate.

The announcement that no "long leave" will be granted this term has been received with indignation by all the scholars. Canon LYTTELTON has come to this decision after careful thought, and it is no secret to say he has been greatly influenced by our disclosures last year as to the supper parties which Etonians had been in the habit of giving at the Ritz. One in particular, in which a certain Marquis, heir to 100,000 acres, took part, was particularly disgraceful.

The Duke of BILTON was "sent up for good" yesterday. This is only the second time that the event has happened in his Grace's family, the previous occasion being in 1559, when JOHN DE BYLTON received a similar honour. Fireworks are being let off to-night at Bilton House to celebrate the occasion.

A COMEDY WITHOUT MUSIC.

Mr. H. V. ESMOND has the gift of names. He has called his new play at the Lyric *Under the Greenwood Tree*. Having decided to annex the title of somebody else's book, a lesser man might have called it *Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress*, or *The Pickwick Papers*; but Mr. ESMOND, with unerring instinct, hits upon the only possible name. Then comes another question: What shall he call his heroine? She is a million heiress—the richest woman in England. Let me think now—h'm—ah!—no—no—ha, I have it! *Mary Hamilton*. Of course—why, don't you remember there was a *MARY HAMILTON* last year who was reputed to be the richest woman in England? Rather subtle that, eh? Now we want a name for one of the men. *Gilbert Chesterton*? No, I don't much care about that.



A DISPLAY OF ARMS.

Mr. Charles Cherry. Miss Maxine Elliott.

Hall Caine? That's not bad; but why *Hall*! . . . Ah, I have it. *Kenneth Graham* . . .

But on second thoughts Mr. ESMOND did draw the line there, and at the last moment the name was changed to *Sir Kenneth Friarly*. Of course I know Mr. ESMOND has a grievance against THACKERAY, who deliberately called one of his books *Esmond*; but he should not let it rankle like this. After all, it happened a long time ago.

To get, however, to the play itself. *Mary*, being bored with life and her millions (Act I.), decides to take a holiday in a caravan, away from everybody. (Cf. *Daily Mail* for example of this in real life.) There she meets the squire of those parts (Act II.), who falls in love with her (Act III.) under the impression that she is really a gipsy. It turns out, however, that she is not (Act IV. Tableau. Curtain).

I should have liked to take it all

quite seriously. I was prepared to believe that *Hylton*, the squire, really thought *Mary* was a gipsy, that they fell in love with each other at first sight, and got married next day, and that *Hylton* was indeed (as freely advertised) a man, a real man. But when Miss MAXINE ELLIOTT appeared on the stage in a bathing-dress, with her hair over her shoulders, and said, "Who's for a swim?" then I realised that I had made a mistake. I yawned, and wondered if it was too late to get in at the Gaiety. Frankly, I prefer these things with music.

The best acting was shown by Mr. ERIC MATORIN as *Sir Kenneth Friarly*, and Miss MARY JERROLD as *Peggy Ingledew*. The latter, in a perfect HILDA TREVELYAN part, quite reconciled me to the absence of Miss TREVELYAN; while Mr. MATORIN, as a young man of twenty, was delightful. His boyish naturalness was a welcome change from the elaborate coolness, so unlike anything in real life, which is affected by most impersonators of young men on the stage. M.

REPUTATIONS OF THE SESSION.

An Exercise in the Exuberant if Caustic Manner of TIPPY, M.P.

LOOKING back with glistening eyes on the Session that is over I am particularly impressed by the success of the Prime Minister—"dear old C.-B.," as we all affectionately call him. No one among all the great august figures who have raised the Mother of Parliaments to be the maternal power she is bulk more largely than Sir HENRY CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN. I do not mean physically, although he is no dwarf, but intellectually. One cannot think of his wise and genial face and the white and bitter malice of Mr. BALFOUR's in the same breath. C.-B., in a word, has been the success of the Session. That certain Bills have had to go, that his programme has had again and again to be revised and curtailed, is nothing. The man remains: a man is mightier than bills or programmes. C.-B. remains: the ever bland, the ever courteous, the trusted friend of his sovereign, and incidentally the best judge of Limericks in the country. It is pre-eminently C.-B.'s Session.

Of Sir EDWARD GREY's success I can hardly bring myself to speak, so conspicuous has it been. This cold,

competent aristocrat fascinates me. As I sit in my place through the long debates I occasionally steal a moment from my literary work, and laying down my fountain pen gaze with awe at the fastidious patrician who is ready at the call of duty to leave behind him all the pursuits of the high life—stag shooting, and cub hunting, and fly-fishing for dace—to spend his hours in the weary round of international politics. And how well he does it. It is safe to say that never has there been a finer Foreign Minister. Sir EDWARD GREY must be called by any impartial critic the success of the Session.

Of all the offices that are difficult to fill perhaps that of Chancellor of the Exchequer is the first. For what is the Chancellor of the Exchequer? As a well-known Tory said to me not long ago in the Lobby, he is the housekeeper of the nation. An excellent phrase. And just as in a flourishing boarding-house every lodger has a word of criticism for the commissariat department, so in the nation at large have we all our own vigilant eyes on the housekeeper. To succeed, then, in this post is to succeed indeed; yet Mr. ASQUITH (God bless him!) has done it. The House without this kindly, capable financier would not be the same place. I can hardly bring myself to think of it without tears. Mr. ASQUITH has undoubtedly been the success of the Session.

And what of Mr. HALDANE? Ah, here is success indeed: not success as we lightly use the word over our coffee, cigars, and liqueurs, but success with a capital S. If there is one office that is more difficult than another to fill it is that of Minister for War. The Minister for War was once described to me by one of the rising hopes of the young Tory party as the watch-dog of Empire; and I thought it a good phrase, although there is considerable difference between one's idea of a dog and the pallid face, the heavy brows, the pursed mouth, the eyes always looking overworked, and the strong chin and jaw of Mr. HALDANE, although, to be quite frank, it must be admitted that a watch-dog without a strong jaw is not of the highest service, as another Tory once shrewdly remarked to me. That, however, is beside the mark. The thing is that in spite of his physical appearance Mr. HALDANE has been the success of the Session.

To think of the House without Mr. BURNS in it would be impossible; and if the news of his death were to come to me I cannot imagine how I



Shortsighted Golfer. "Eh, mon, but this is an awfu' bonnie lie. The ba's fairly teed up. What club will I tak?"

Cadd'e. "It's no that I'm botherin' aboot, Sir. It's whaur'll we hide if ye foozle it!"

should carry on at all the weary interval between its announcement and the time it took me to get to the typewriter. To me there has always been a different feeling about the death of a man of genius which is not excited in me by the death of any other type of man. To this day I can remember the weeks of gloom from which I suffered when I heard that CHARLES DICKENS was dead. I had to address a political banquet on the night of the day when GEORGE ELIOT died, and it was with difficulty I could open my lips. TENNYSON's death—I don't know that I ever saw him—I regretted almost as much as if he had been a relative, which to be exact he was not, and so it would be were I to hear of the death of JOHN BURNS, although that is an event which I feel to be far distant, if not impossible. "Thou wert not born for death, immortal BURNS!" But if he did die no one could mourn him more than I, for has he not been the signal success of the Session?

And Mr. HERBERT GLADSTONE? Mr. GLADSTONE has had a hard time;

which is natural, because he has the hardest office. The Home Secretary touches daily life at almost every point; and not if he were an archangel would it be possible for him to satisfy everybody; and yet what a success he has been! Look at Mr. EDALJI—is he not free? There never was such a triumph for a Home Secretary who had had the boldness to release a prisoner as the perpetration of the last Great Wyrley serious outrage at a time when Mr. EDALJI was at Great Yarmouth. I remember meeting Mr. GLADSTONE that night, and being struck by his appearance. If I had never seen success before, I saw it then. I raised my hat reverently, and passed to my seat and typewriter on tiptoe.

TIPPY.

Or a number of "Rules to be observed in case of fire" recently given to various schoolmasters, the first is "Keep cool." Mr. Punch wishes to give this very simple solution of the problem a greater publicity than it would otherwise have.

THE TWO DESPERADOES:

OR, THE VERY LAST LAPPS.

(Special to "Punch.")

LATEST advices from Lapland only tend to confirm our original impression as to the desperate nature of the task undertaken by the dauntless explorers, Mr. WILLY LE WINDT and HARRY DE QUEUX. No white man has ever traversed the Gallo-Tauric peninsula, that wild, derelict tract of territory lying between the high plateau of Rouge-Montane and the Sapphire Sea. It is as yet an uncharted wilderness, without even a single 9-hole golf course to variegate the monotony of the inhospitable landscape. In the last century the famous Borneo traveller PSALMANAZAR attempted the journey armed solely with a niblick, but was driven back by the djinns and other dolichocephalous thanatophidia infesting this dreadful region, with the loss of his memory, both whiskers, and a priceless sleeping-bag made of the tail feathers of a giant sloth.

NORTHWARD HO!

Messrs. WILLY LE WINDT and HARRY DE QUEUX, however, are not the men to be daunted by such dangers, and are leading an expedition to explore the Gallo-Tauric Hinterland, and ascertain, on behalf of the Russian and San Marino Governments, whether the reports of the Lapps as to gigantic deposits of macassar-oil and *caches* of caviare in the interior are well founded. A journey of about 6,000 miles on hydroplanes, driven by gas suction engines, will have to be made from the time *terra firma* is quitted on the Straphanger Fjord to the time civilisation is regained at the Ritzbergen Hotel.

LOST TO CIVILISATION FOR SIX MONTHS!

As there is neither fuel nor food in the whole of the peninsula, complete supplies for this period will have to be taken by the party, which will consist of Messrs. LE WINDT and DE QUEUX, Professor DOUGLAS TRUEFITT the eminent macassarologist, two *cavasses*, three caviarasses, ten photographers, one flash-light expert, fifteen taxidermists, two Gallo-Tauric interpreters, seventeen hydroplane cooks, and thirty-nine fur-coat specialists.

REMARKABLE LAPPSUS LINGUE.

Mr. DE QUEUX, who recently made a preliminary canter up to the gate of this unknown land in the motor yacht of the President of the Republic of San Marino, has received from Lapp traders reports of a mysterious tribe inhabiting the interior of the Gallo-Tauric or Koko peninsula. According to the Lapps these people are so small as to be scarcely visible to the naked eye, measuring only thirteen kilowatts from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, and fifteen kilowatts from the crown of the foot to the sole of the head. They are highly electrical, addicted to cannibalism in moderation, and extremely timid in the presence of strangers. They live in beehive-shaped huts made of the skin of the ambongus, and are fanatical adherents of Tingleyism. Whether these statements are correct remains to be proved, but Mr. DE QUEUX is prepared for any emergency, and has ordered twenty sets of Diabolo to present to the chief of the tribe, whose name, by a curious coincidence, is alleged to be LITTLE TITCHIKOFF. The Legion of Frontiersmen, we understand, has volunteered to a man for the expedition, and the entire San Marino navy will shortly proceed to Ritzbergen to place itself at Mr. DE QUEUX's disposal. The explorers have already purchased 300 reindeer—they expect to use about 1,500 of these animals on their journey—and are each provided

with 600 fur coats and an automatic press-cutting apparatus.

P.S.—I have just heard of the miraculous escape of Mr. HARRY DE QUEUX from what appeared to be certain doom. Whilst practising figure-skating on the frozen summit of Cape Turtle he slipped over the edge and glissaded several thousand feet before he was brought up, breathless but unhurt, by a gigantic walrus which was walking leisurely down the slope, and which Mr. DE QUEUX has since invested with the Order of Merit (San Marino).

NEEDLES AND NERVES.

[“Needlework for raffled nerves is infinitely soothing.”—*The Gentlewoman*.]

WHEN you come back to town from the moor or the down, the Alps or the ocean of Zuyder,
To find that your house is the home of the mouse, the rat, the blackbeetle and spider;
When from attic to hall there is dirt over all, when the maid you implicitly trusted
Has not even seen to your mowing-machine, but let it get mouldy and rusted,
When your favourite chair she has smashed past repair,
when you learn that she used to make merry
With her roisterous friends through the wildest weekends on the pick of your claret and sherry,
Do not start to orate on the folly of fate; do not storm like a fury and cuss it,
But rather instead take a needle and thread and soothe your poor nerves with a gusset.

When you sadly return from the ben and the burn, the bracken, the birch and the heather,
And struggle in vain with your holiday brain to string a few verses together,
When you stare for an age at a spotless, white page,
when you find your attention divided,
And you can't get along with your humorous song, for your metre is still undecided;
When you think of the pile of accounts on your file and the tradesmen demanding their money,
When, unless you'd be sport of the Bankruptcy Court,
you simply have got to be funny;
Keep cool, my friend, cool! Do not rave like a fool!
Your troubles will soon be forgotten
If you stitch up a shirt or the hem of a skirt with a sedative needle and cotton.

Oh, you poor millionaire, when you're tired of black Care
who sits in your motor to worry,
No matter how far be the flight of your car, no matter how fast you may hurry,
When the stocks you have bought do not rise as they ought, when the companies you were promoting
Make you shake in your shoes, as they flatly refuse to show any symptom of floating,
When you find that for once you have been a great dunce, and made a mistake in your prices,
When all's going wrong, and you wonder how long you will manage to stave off the crisis,
Do not storm! Do not swear! Do not pull out your hair! If you find yourself nervous and snappy,
Take your soothing work-box! Darn the socks, not the stocks, and you'll soon become perfectly happy.

“On the local side there were few better forwards than Lipsham.”—*Tribune*.

CERTAINLY not more than four.



THE LAST STRAW.

"SPARRERS BITIN' WELL THIS EVENIN', GUVNER?"

A PEDANT.

THOUGHTFULLY he took his glasses from his waistcoat pocket, wiped them, put them on, and examined the postmark of the letter lying on his plate. He walked slowly to the mantelpiece, took from there a magnifying-glass, and continued his examination. As he did so mere earnestness gave way to wonder, curiosity, surprise, anxiety, and baffled enquiry. He put down the glass, and thought for a bit, and then took it up again, and made a still longer and more minute scrutiny. "It must be St. Ann's Road," he said at last; "but is there such a place?"

Either the others knew and didn't like to say, or they were loth to advance an opinion without sufficient data. At any rate the question remained unanswered.

"There is a time-table in the hall, father," volunteered his younger but more intelligent son. "Why not look in that?"

"A good suggestion," answered the father, "and you may go and get the time-table."

The time-table arrived reluctantly. "Ah!" said the searcher after truth, "here it is. 'St. Ann's Road (Middlesex)—from Moorgate Street and St. Pancras, six miles.' Then this letter must have come from St. Ann's Road. I don't know anybody at St. Ann's Road. ROBINSON, I believe, used to come to Moorgate Street every morning, but I don't think that he came from St. Ann's Road. Besides, if he did, he is dead now, so it cannot be from him. DOROTHY," he added, "your mother is upstairs. Go and ask her if she is coming down to breakfast."

"Mother says she is going to have her breakfast in her room this morning," reported his obedient, though female, offspring.

"That is just like your mother," he said irritably. "Go and ask her who could be writing to us from St. Ann's Road."

"There is a St. Anne's and a St. Anne's Park," ventured his daughter. "Might it be one of those?"

"No, it mightn't," answered her parent; "go and do as I tell you."

"The only person mother can

think of," announced the long-suffering DOROTHY, "is Uncle MACDOUGAL."

"Uncle MACDOUGAL," he retorted sharply, "lives at St. Andrews," and half mechanically he picked up the magnifying-glass again.

"JOHN," he said to his elder son, "go and get my pocket-book. It is in the breast pocket of my morning coat. The coat is hanging up in my dressing-room on the left-hand side of the small wardrobe."

After a long interval JOHN returned. "The coat is not there," he said sadly.

"Then JANE has it in the sewing-room," said his inexorable sire.

After another and lengthier interval JOHN returned with the pocket-book. • His father snatched it from him, turned over the pages feverishly, found no St. Ann's Road there, and cast it angrily from him.

"I cannot think," he said, searching the weary faces of all his children in turn for the information he desired, "I cannot think who can have written to me from St. Ann's Road."

Then he opened the envelope.



Irate Keeper (to person who will persist in bobbing his head above the butt when the birds are driven up). "KEEP THA HEID DOON, MAN. NEEN O' THA PULPIT WAYS HEER!"

CHARIVARIA.

A PENSIONER, aged eighty-one, living at Preston, has just received a medal for meritorious service in the Crimean War. We understand that the reason of the delay was that the War Office doubted the genuineness of the claim, the veteran not being in a workhouse.

Mr. HALDANE, who has received a copy of a resolution passed by the Plumstead Radical Club protesting against the contract for horse-shoes being placed abroad, is said to be no believer in the idea that a horse-shoe brings luck.

A propos of the Railway Crisis *The Daily Mail* asks, "Can both sides meet?" We would go further and express the hope that, if both cannot, anyhow one may be able to.

The price of diamonds is rising. In Park Lane this is pointed to as an example of how all the necessities of life are becoming dearer.

Mr. A. B. WALKLEY will treat in a forthcoming book of "The Aesthetics of the Theatre." He leaves it to other dramatic critics to write "The Anaesthetics of the Theatre."

A curious rumour was afloat last week to the effect that Sir ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE now owned Mr. HALL CAINE. It is supposed to be due to the announcement in a morning paper that Sir ARTHUR had been presented, on the occasion of his marriage, with a copy of SHAKSPEARE.

Germany now possesses the fastest warship afloat in the form of a torpedo boat destroyer, which has steamed 33·9 knots an hour on her trial trip. Great Britain, however, possesses the fastest warship not afloat in the form of the torpedo boat destroyer *Viper*, which made 37 knots, and now lies at the bottom of the sea.

One man, at any rate, does not believe that airships are practical politics. A New York millionaire is building a house the roof of which is to be made of plate-glass.

Will the wonders of Science never cease? "Many electric lunches were to be seen on the river," says a contemporary of ours, which is occasionally brightened by misprints.

We beg to acknowledge our indebtedness to a New York cable company for the expression "wireless

wires," which we chanced upon last week, and which we do not remember to have seen before, though we may merely have been lucky.

"I have hardly a vacant seat in church when it is too wet for golf or motoring," complained a clergyman, according to *The Daily Telegraph*. As someone once said, Some people use religion as a cloak, others as an umbrella.

A tradesman in Kiel has only just received a postcard dated December 2, 1898, wishing him a Happy New Year in 1899. Owing to the delay in the delivery of the card, the wish is, of course, now quite useless.

Answer to a Correspondent: No, Harvest Burgundy is not made from Harvest Burgs.

The Young Idea.

(From Mr. Punch's Nursery Correspondent.)

Little Boy. The cows I saw this morning hadn't got their horns on. At least (thoughtfully) they weren't mooing.

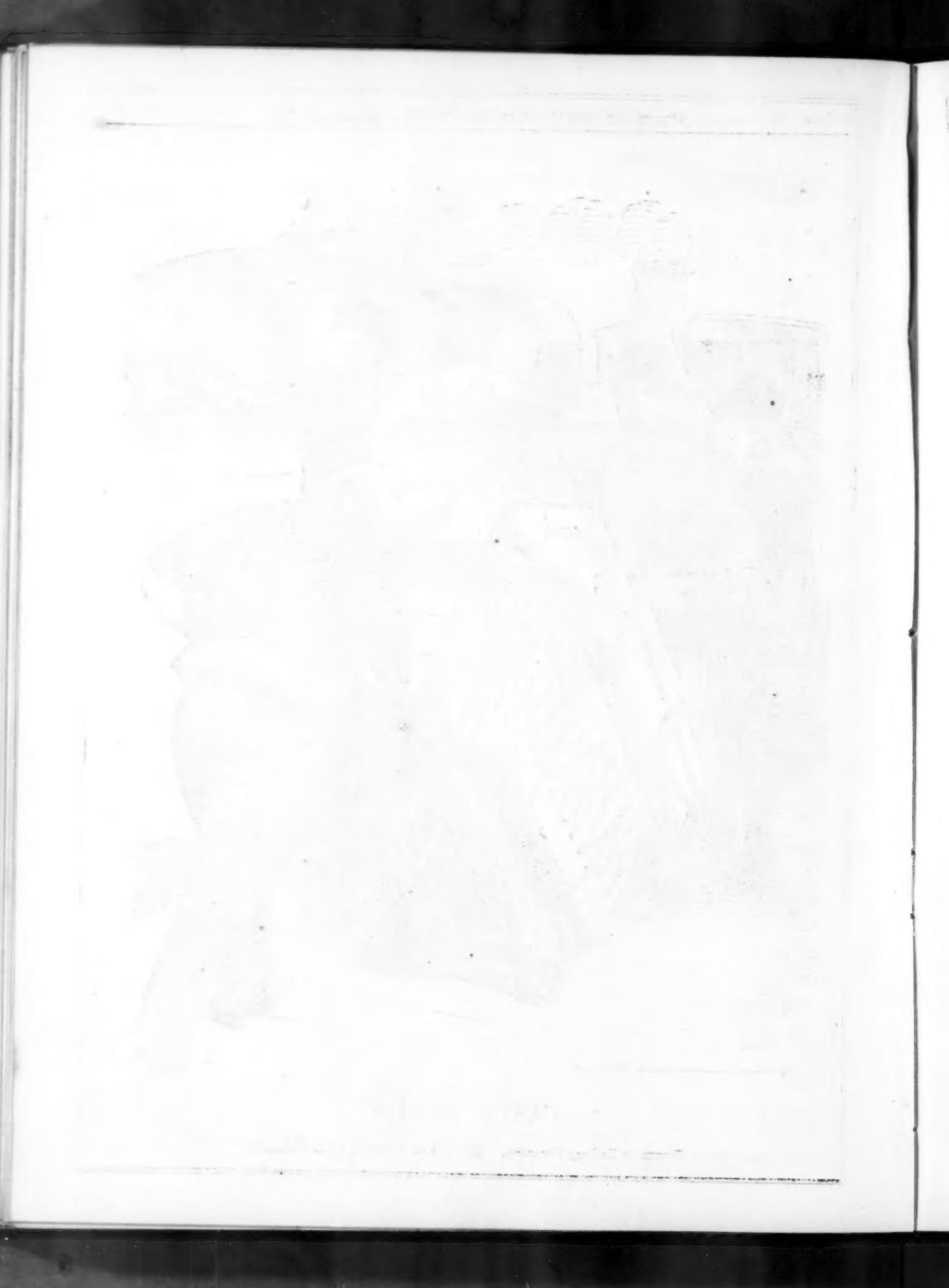
Auntie. Well, but cows don't moo with their horns. Did you think they did?

Little Boy (surprised). Don't they? Then what are they for?



CASUS BELL-I.

PORTER (to Railway Directors). "BY YOUR LEAVE, GENTLEMEN!"





"THE TEST OF TIME."

Doubting Purchaser (after many questions). "WHAT ABOUT HIS CHARACTER?"

Old Irishman. "WELL, THE MAN THAT LET ME HAVE 'IM GAVE 'IM A FIFTEEN YEARS' CHARACTER, AND YE WON'T RATE THAT."

MOTORING FOR ACTRESSES.

TAUGHT IN ONE LESSON BY A LADY MOTORIST.

(With apologies to "The Daily Graphic.")

THE first thing the would-be actress motorist has to learn to do, is to smile. This sounds easy, but it is not so easy as it sounds; for it is necessary to keep the lips closed against dust. The lady motorist's smile begins before she enters the car, as she is probably looking her charmingest at that moment, and many eyes will be turned upon her; and it must continue without falter during the whole run, for at any moment she may be under observation, and an expression of seriousness or concern upon her face would be unbecoming. For this reason long runs are only possible to ladies who are practised in smiling for many hours at a stretch—and, I may add, at a full stretch, for the smile must be whole-hearted and tenacious. Thus the beginner should be careful not to overtax herself, or her smile will become set and rigid and permanently injured; and, be it noted, an ingrained smile is worse than no smile at all. On returning home she should retire to her room and not attempt to relinquish her smile until she has shut the door, as the effort will be both painful and unsightly, and may bring on cramp of the facial muscles. Then let her rub her mouth and cheeks briskly for ten

minutes with an ivory billiard ball dipped in cold cream. The subsequent twitchings may be allayed by the application of any powerful astringent lotion. Some ladies find that when their smile is fatigued it takes on the expression of a cat's. Needless to say, the art of motoring is not to be acquired by such as these, and the same remark applies to those whose smile, from excess of nervous apprehension, becomes what is known as a "sickly grin." No, the actress motorist's smile must be gentle, bright, and expectant.

Everything about the actress motorist must be a complete abnegation of the realities of handling a motor-car. Her clothes must be charming and always new. Conscious of her pretty feet, she should always pause with one foot on the step, slightly raise the skirt, and look round over her shoulder as if expectant of a photographer before entering the car. She must put in the clutch, and perform other operations, with a languorous touch of her neatly gloved fingers, and she must never look at what she is doing, as it is absurd to smile at the brake or the lubrication pump. No, she should look roguishly from the corner of her half-closed lids in the direction of the handsomest or most numerous male observers. All these things she must do if she would master the art of motoring, and add an extra touch of actuality and winsomeness to the already cloying pages of the *Skatler* and the *Tetch*.

OUR LIVING SERIAL.

[One of our evening contemporaries announces a novel serial story. Letters have been invited from readers ambitious to figure as heroes or heroines; a number of these letters have been selected by the Editor, and have been handed to a graphologist from whose "readings" of the handwriting a novelist will construct his plot and characters. By a strange coincidence, we have been busy on exactly the same lines, and we have pleasure in printing the letters we have chosen.]

DEAR MR. EDITOR.—I should so love to be a heroine in real print! Do select me for your story. I can't imagine how you can tell all about me from my handwriting. A friend of mine—an awfully nice one, and that's all I'm going to tell you about him!—says it is something like palmistry. He's rather clever at palmistry, and has told me several things about myself that are *quite* true. I ought to tell you that although I manage one of the tobacco stalls on the Underground Railway, I only work for my own amusement. I am really a peer's daughter who is weary of the frivolities of Society as at present constituted. Will you think me very egotistical if I say that I always speak a kind word to the old match-seller on my way to and from my work, and that on two or three occasions I have picked up a little slum child and wiped its tears away with my own lace handkerchief? I have tender violet eyes.

Yours most sincerely, MILLICENT.
72, Grosvenor Square, W.

DEAR SIR,—You may put me in the story if you like. It would please the governor, perhaps, for he's always on at me about its being time I made a name for myself. Besides, there's a sweet little girl I know who'd be jolly proud of me if you could see your way to make me a hero. She sells cigarettes; I pose as a City clerk and buy them at ten for threepence, and give them to the old matchseller when I get outside the station. If it were not for her, I should be in Scotland with my people now, so you may know that she is nothing ordinary. This is shocking writing, so I'll copy some *Shakspeare* or something to enclose with this letter, and you can give that to your handwriting man.

The Albany, S.W. Yours, &c., CALLOW.

SIR,—I am desired by the Duke of BARRATOWN to write to you, and to say that his Grace is much interested in your project. He has not hitherto taken any active interest in literature, but your scheme strongly appeals to him, and he wishes me to say that if he can be introduced into your story without being made to look ridiculous, you are at liberty so to introduce him. His Grace, having had several weeks of shooting, and being still in Scotland, is somewhat out of training for writing, and he therefore hopes that my caligraphy will serve your expert's purpose.

Yours obediently, WILLIAM ST. CLAIR MALBROOK
(*Private Secretary*).

Callow, Tochtermochty, N.B.

SIR,—Thrice has my name appeared in print in other than parish announcements and the county *Gazette*. Once it was in a report of a reception at Lambeth Palace, where I had the misfortune to have my watch stolen; again, it was in the *Guardian*, in an advertisement for a *locum tenens* which I inserted in '94; and the third time it was in *The Times* (surely the most influential journal of our day) in the notice of the marriage of my churchwarden's daughter, at which I officiated. I should indeed be honoured if your distinctly amusing paper provided a fourth occasion. I may tell you that I am a man of benevolent appearance, with clean-cut features and silvery hair, and I am happy to say that I have been

the means of effecting more than one reconciliation in divided families. My parish has the distinction of including the country seat of the Duke of BARRATOWN, who is generally here with his family at Christmas time.

Believe me, dear Sir, —Yours most faithfully,
Cheriton, Sandley, Barks. J. AUGUSTINE TONING.

Owing to the indisposition of Mr. HALL CAINE, of which we hear from a private source, we are unable at present to make public our decision as to whom we shall commission to write the story. We can promise our readers, however, that it shall not be Mr. WILLIAM LE QUEUX.

THE LATE JANET.

To think what merit, unbeknown but rich,
May lurk beneath a piebald hide!
We may have done a worthy mare
Injustice which
Is past repair
(Death claims us all at last, and even *Janet* died).

Jane dragged a 'bus, helped by a stronger steed,
Between the Bank and Barnes. A hearse
Had been her fitter *métier*,
Who hated speed,
Who loved delay,

From work of any sort, in fact, who seemed averse.

Unwhipped she sauntered; whipped she never stirred,
Nor often found our treatment kind.
And now, too late, we think maybe

We grossly erred,
Who whipped, and she,

Though lazy with her legs, was busy with her mind.

To equine eyes she very likely seemed
The absolute epitome
Of abstract thought. Perhaps by night
Whole stables teemed
With keen delight
When she held argument on some deep -ology.

Or when she jibbed and kicked as seeming shy
Of jobs, and earned her meed of whacks,
Was solving by experiment
The problem:—"By
What Means Prevent

Flies Taking Liberties on Busy Horses' Backs?"

We do not curse or heap abuse upon
Our men of thought, nor say they shirk
Their proper labours. Seldom, too,
We beat the Don
Or black or blue
Or even homely pink for cutting honest work.

Then why beat *Janet*? Think of her distress,
And spare, oh, spare, the scornful laugh.
Potential soul of all that's good,
She died (v. s.)
Misunderstood. . . .
Her consolation is this public epitaph.

THERE is, at any rate, one lucky man who was told about the present weather. He advertises in *The Daily Telegraph* particulars of the School of Dramatic Art, and announces—

"SUMMER TERM COMMENCES SEPTEMBER 23RD."

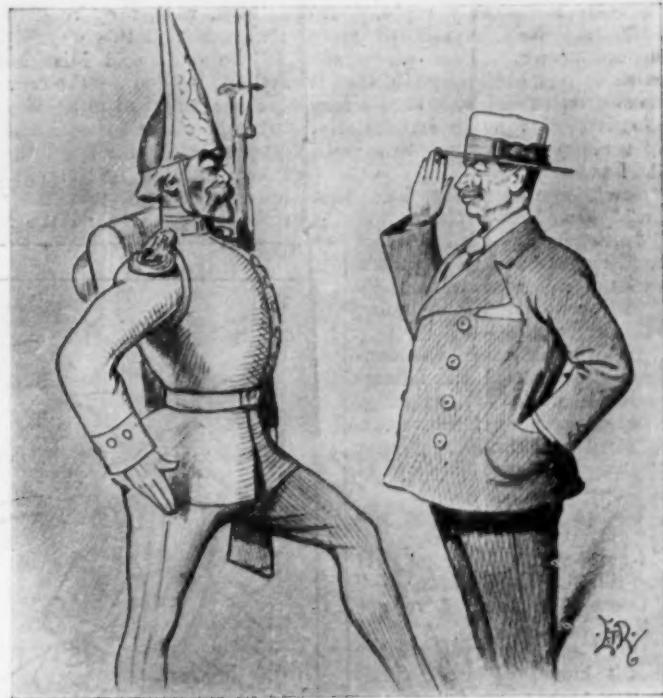
A DAY WI' BURNS IN GERMANY.

(ACCORDING TO THE "DAILY MAIL-ED FIRST.")



WHAT DID THEY EXPECT? THIS?

A Berlin newspaper says "Mr. Burns is less of the 'uncut' diamond than Germans had been led to expect."



THE INEVITABLE INTERCHANGE OF UNIFORMS.

Honest John (of the "Garde du Corps") is received by Imperial Wilhelm arrayed à la "Trafalgar Square" in honour of his visitor.

Pageant Echoes.

"The historic St. Mary's Hall, the pride of Coventry, from which Lady Godiva set forth on her ride, is to undergo restoration and repair.

It is proposed to strip the roof of the old lead and to re-cover it with new metal."

Evening News.

We understand that unless the new metal is abandoned the Mayor of COVENTRY will take no part in the proceedings.

Our Familiar Press.

"The reappearance of the sea serpent, seen, we note, by a Cove known as Gulla Stem, emboldens us to print the following communication."—*Daily News.*

As a matter of fact the man's name was something quite different.



HOW WE DO IT ON LAVENDER HILL! MOST RE-WRESCHEN!

Mr. Burns attended the manœuvres of the Garde du Corps at Wreschen and participated in long and fatiguing marches with the men.

Prophets without Honour in their own Parish.

"WARMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS. PIGS, IMBECILES, TRAMPS, &c." *Warminster Journal.*

More about the "Lusitania."

"She will have crossed in a little over five days—5 days 1 hour 10 minutes if she arrives at 1.20 p.m. English time, and 5 days 1 hour 46 minutes if she is another 36 minutes on the journey. These are approximate figures, but there seems a fair likelihood of this being near the mark."—*Liverpool Daily Post.*

THE computation has been made with extraordinary accuracy, but might it not have been taken a step further? What if she is another 46 minutes on her journey? Ah!

THE DIABOLIST.

I SHOULD never dream of doubting a lady's word. If Miss MIDDLETON says that she really did do the thing twice (this is, in fact, what she does say), then I can only reply, "Indeed," and help myself to more bread-and-butter. But when she goes on to add quite casually that it happened on French soil, then I may be forgiven if I smile sardonically, light a cigarette, and say to myself, "Ah, I thought so."

"Now, what exactly does that mean?" said Miss MIDDLETON.

"To begin with" I pointed out, "French soil is different from English. More alluvial."

"Of course, if you're going to use long words—"

"Then, again, take the conditions under which the labouring classes work. They enjoy the advantages of Conscription and Tariff Reform. True, over here we have the Bishop of LONDON—"

"You're jealous because you can't play yourself."

"I can't play? My good girl! If you think an Englishman—"

"Come on, then. I've got the thing here."

"Oh, I say, have you really? I didn't know. I don't think that was quite nice of you."

Miss MIDDLETON produced a small box from under the table, and emptied the contents on the lawn.

"There you are," she said. I got up and looked at it.

"I think it only right to tell you," I said nervously, "that I haven't got my Diabolo jersey with me."

"Take off anything you like," said Miss MIDDLETON kindly.

I took off my hat and coat, and had another look at it. All I could see was a small skipping-rope and a large cotton-reel. It seemed simple enough. The only question was—what did one do with the cotton-reel?

"Is it all here?" I asked. It would be too absurd to start if the balls or the billiard chalk or something really important were missing.

"Why, of course. What did you—"

"Oh, nothing. You did it twice, you said?"

"Yes, twice. Really."

Twice. That knocked on the head my idea of ignoring the cotton-reel, and skipping up and down the lawn. Anyone could do that half-a-dozen times.

"Twice," I repeated, and I grasped the rope.

"Ah, you hold it that way too?"

"Of course. It's the only way."

"Yes; but some people do it the other way."

"Oh, well, they're silly fools. I always hold it this way."

"Go on," said Miss MIDDLETON, and she handed me the cotton-reel.

Something had to be done. I took the reel . . . and then I had a sudden inspiration. Of course, that was it. I balanced the reel carefully on the top of my head, took the rope, and slowly skipped round the lawn. At

"That's how we play it in Italy," I replied loftily. "Of course there are local variations of the game. In France, no doubt, they—"

"Oh, you—you—" She went off into another paroxysm.

I took out my handkerchief.

"The white flag," I said. "I surrender. Teach me the French way."

* * * * *

I put the reel on to the string for the one-hundred-and-thirtieth time, and moved my hands rapidly up and down. For the one-hundred-and-thirtieth time the thing wavered, heeled over, and fell to the ground.

"Is the man who invented this living in London?" I asked, as I sat down and mopped my head.

"Oh no; it's a very old game. I think the Chinese—"

"Ah, do you know, I rather suspected them. Very ingenious race the Chinese. They have some tortures— Do you happen to know the 'Death by the Thousand Cuts'?"

"No. Is that good?"

"Well, it depends which side you're on. But, even if you're losing, it does end some time, whereas this—"

"But it's quite easy to spin it really; it's only the catching that's so hard. Now, I'll show you again."

I watched her very carefully. Then I got up and took my waistcoat off.

"I'll do it or die," I said; "and if I die here's my watch and chain, and thank you for a very jolly week-end. Now then."

I must have got the knack suddenly. The reel began to spin round. "What do I do now?" I cried.

"Pull your hands apart, quick."

I pulled the cord out straight. The reel shot up, hit me in the eye, wound itself inside three loops of the string, and fell gently to the ground. I suppose I sighed.

"That's why it's called Diabolo," said Miss MIDDLETON hastily.

"Yes, that was what I said. Diabolo. Diabolo. Di—"

"Yes, I know."

"Let's be quite sure about it," I said, rubbing my eye. "Diabolo. Di—"

"It does that sometimes, you know."

"I didn't know (Diabolo). But I do now. (Diabolo, Diabolo.)"

"Does it hurt very much?"



A SUGGESTION FOR A SUITABLE EQUIPMENT FOR SOLDIERS ON THE ADVENT OF AERIAL WARFARE.

the laurel bushes in the north-east corner I had an anxious moment, but with a deft jerk I got the thing back into place again. Coming into the straight for the first time I quickened my pace. I reached Miss MIDDLETON panting, but triumphant.

"Once," I said.

There was a shriek of laughter. I looked down suddenly, and the reel slipped off on to the lawn.

"Now you've spoilt it," I said in some annoyance. "I was just going—"

"Oh, my dear, what are you doing?" gasped Miss MIDDLETON.

"Diabolo," I said coldly.

"Diabolo!"



Doris. "WHAT IS THE TIME, PLEASE, GRANDPA?"

The Professor (absent-mindedly). "I'M AFRAID I CAN'T TELL YOU, MY DEAR. MY WATCH HAS BEEN SAYING 12-15 FOR SOME TIME; BUT UNFORTUNATELY I DON'T KNOW WHEN IT STOPPED."

"Di—"
"Shall I get some water?"
"Oh no. Di—"
"Let's stop for a moment."
"All right. Diabolo."

We were * * * * * standing opposite each other and spinning like anything. (Miss MIDDLETON had discovered another set somewhere.) Every now and then one of us would jerk the cord very violently. Then one of three things happened. Sometimes the reel would wind itself inside the string and stay there. More often it would shoot into the air, revolving sideways with great rapidity. On very rare occasions it would fly straight up, still spinning. When that happened the player endeavoured to catch the reel again upon the string before it could touch the ground. Miss MIDDLETON says she has done it twice, but that was in France.

"Where are the text-books on the subject?" I asked. *Great Diabolists at a Glance*. Have you got that in the house?"

"We've got *The Diabolist from Within*, and *The Hundred Best Diabolists*, and *Fifteen Decisive Diabolists of the World*."

"You know, this is a game that one ought to begin at the nursery end—when the limbs are supple and the wind is good. Are you aware that there is a small boy in England somewhere who has caught the thing one thousand four hundred and thirty-seven times consecutively?"

"What's his name?"
"I don't know. GERARD, I should think. 1437 GERARD."

"Boys like that are generally called EDWARD," said Miss MIDDLETON. "All the same I don't believe it. How many times did you say?"

"One thousand five hundred and eighty-two. He's quite a little chap, and he regards the present situation in the railway world as fraught with grave danger to both parties. They wired to ask him."

"I nearly did it then."
"I'm really going to do it now. Now watch."

I got it spinning beautifully. When it was going at its very best pace I pulled my hands apart. Miss MIDDLETON gazed into the air.

"How extraordinary!" she said. I shaded my eyes with my hand.
"Is it in sight again yet?" I asked.

"You'd better get ready. It will be here soon, I should think."
I began to feel quite excited.

"I bet EDWARD never got it higher than this," I said, as I held the skipping-rope up.

"I wish I had my opera-glasses. I wonder if I should have time to—Hallo! What's that?" She pointed to the ground.

"What? That's yours, isn't it?"
"No, there's mine."
"Then—perhaps you had three?"
"No, I'm sure I didn't." She picked it up and examined it.

"Does it—does it look as if it had fallen from a very great height?"

"Well, no."

"Oh, well, I— Oh, Diabolo."

* * * * *
Diabolo. Of course I know now that I was wrong when I started skipping round the lawn. That is not how they play it in France. But still I cannot help thinking it compares favourably with the French method. And undeniably it was a smart performance of mine. There was one moment by the laurel bushes... Well, I don't want to boast, but I must say I doubt if EDWARD could have done it. A. A. M.

OUR BOOKING-OFFICE.

(By Mr. Punch's Staff of Learned Clerks.)

Mr. CONRAD's new romance—or "simple tale," as he calls it—*The Secret Agent* (METHUEN) may have the effect of largely increasing his select following, for it is, I believe, his first story the scene of which is exclusively England, and not only England, but London. Mr. CONRAD knows his London—particularly Soho—well, and never can I remember this great city of ours being put to more sinister uses. *The Secret Agent* is a story of the *agent provocateur* and the terrorist written with such power and realism that Soho can never again be the same place to any of its readers. Mr. CONRAD seems to know equally minutely the minds both of anarchists and police, and incidentally to be almost too familiar with the darker side of international politics. It is a very wonderful book, and I recommend it heartily to all grown-up readers.

Act of God, by ROBERT ELLIOTT (DUCKWORTE), is one of the most remarkable books it has been my good fortune to read for many a year. Strictly speaking, it is a dramatic episode rather than a novel on the orthodox plan, but into this episode are crowded nearly all the greater passions and the smaller motives by which humanity is moved. Love, jealousy, ambition, heroism, self-denial, revenge, intrigue, back-biting—all these and more come into play in *Act of God*. The scene is laid on an East Indiaman in mid-ocean twenty-five years ago, and the persons of the drama are the officers, the sailors, the two saloon passengers, and the emigrants who sail on the ship. Their daily lives, the clash of their personalities and interests, their associations, their conflicts and their conversation are rendered in a fashion that is not far, if at all, short of genius, so strong is the impression of absolute accuracy and fidelity to life that Mr. ELLIOTT creates. His characters define themselves in an instant before the mind of the reader. No laborious piling up of description, no subtle analysis of elusive characteristics is needed. A phrase or a gesture seems to be enough to endow one of Mr. ELLIOTT's men and women with individuality. By no means inferior is the skill with which he makes his atmosphere. The ship is doomed: that you feel from the beginning, and you feel it no less even during such lighter scenes as that of the concert on board, excellent as is the humour with which this is enlivened. Eventually the ship catches fire. This is the great scene, and Mr. ELLIOTT rises splendidly to the height of it. The incident deserves to rank in the very front line of the great tales of unavailing courage and terrible tragedy at sea. There is no happy ending. There could be none to such a story. One caution I must enter. There are incidents and conversations which are strong in more than one sense, but, though they are regrettable, I am bound to add that it is to the

credit of Mr. ELLIOTT's art that he compels us to accept them as real, and not as a mere adventitious tricking out of his story. I also venture to suggest that a writer with a style which in general is so nervous and excellent ought not to descend to such a phrase (p. 118) as "she clapped her hands, like we are told did the women of the Neronic period in the Roman amphitheatre." I will not, however, part from Mr. ELLIOTT on a note of blame. I congratulate him heartily on the execution of a fine and powerful piece of work.

FACTS FOR EVERYONE.

ANOTHER fifty volumes have been added to the Everyone's Library. A few chatty facts about this feat of publishing may interest our readers.

To place all the volumes published up to the hour of writing one on top of the other would take the entire working time of one average plumber from day to day, from September 25, until the first frost of 1909.

If put side by side on a single shelf, the volumes in this series would reach from Land's End to within a mile and a half of John o' Groats, provided that sufficient space was left between the volumes, and that a shelf of that length could be obtained.

Assuming that each leaf in these books is sufficient to light one pipe, the flame of the whole series would be equal to two average Bermondsey fires. The tobacco so lighted would make a mound as big as Brixton Hill; it would also provide enough cigarettes to run two Limerick Competitions of such a magnitude that the cricketer chosen to adjudicate would not be free to play on more than four to six days a week.

The sum-total of the intellect displayed in the works of the Library exceeds that of Mr. GILBERT K. CHESTERTON, Mr. HALL CAINE, and Mr. MAX BEERBOHM combined. It would not be safe to add the name of Mr. BERNARD SHAW to this galaxy, for it is well known that Mr. SHAW has made great strides, and reached unusual heights, during recent times.

An expert estimates that during the next few months there will be engaged in the building trades 7,649 more men than ever before, owing to the demand for extra accommodation for the Everyone's Library.

If all the authors of these books could be brought together and arranged in two parties for a tug of war, the rope required would be long enough to hang all the people that a confirmed dyspeptic, in his most dyspeptic moments, thinks ought to be hanged.

"A Gentleman in Crieff would pay for an occasional Day's Shooting in the neighbourhood. Good Shot. Does not require the game killed." *Strathearn Herald.*

WHAT a remarkable shot he must be, if he can pick them off while living.

THE COOSEQUILL FOUNTAIN PEN CO. (LTD.).
UNSOLOITED TESTIMONIAL.

Dear Sir,
The new fountain pen
you sent me is first rate.
I never understood why they
were called fountain pens.
I used this
yours truly
J. Jones
P.S. Make any use of this you
choose: J. J.

[N.B.—This is not a solitary example. We have
hundreds of similar Testimonials at our offices, which
may be seen there any day.]

GILBERT K. CHESTERTON, Mr. HALL CAINE, and Mr. MAX BEERBOHM combined. It would not be safe to add the name of Mr. BERNARD SHAW to this galaxy, for it is well known that Mr. SHAW has made great strides, and reached unusual heights, during recent times.